

# The Sinking of the USS Buttercup

By Steve Coester '63

Wasn't Second Class Summer just the best time of your life? First we had memorable weeks at Pensacola and Jacksonville flying everything from T-34, T-28, T2J and P2V to old R4D (DC3) and the Grumman goose amphibian. Ejection seat trainer, Dilbert Dunker. All great fun.

Then over to little Creek for TRAMID and playing Frogman and Marine for a week or so. Jogging down the beach with a eight man raft, parachuting off the thirty foot tower, the obstacle course and an amphibious landing. While most of you spent a miserable night on a troop ship at sea I was selected for the helicopter assault team so we spent that evening in the O-Club with the beautiful local girls, and then the next morning we woke late, loaded up took a little sightseeing flight and hit the beach.

But this tale concerns our stop in Philadelphia for damage control training. Remember fighting fires in that cramped compartment and wandering through a smoke filled building in Scott Air Packs? Once again great adventures for young men.

But the highlight was the USS Buttercup. This was an actual section from a heavy cruiser that was hinged to the seawall and could be sunk by opening lots of holes in the hull. The plan was for us to use timbers, mattresses and portable pumps to stop the leaks and keep the ship afloat. Hazardous work in flooded compartments.

Well some genius in my section decided it would really put one over on the establishment to see if we could sink the good old Buttercup faster than it would on its own. This would have to be done in a sneaky manner so the instructors wouldn't have a clue.

The morning of the exercise arrived and we worked hard shoring up timbers and shoving mattresses in holes except we forgot to cover the biggest holes. Also we took the pumps and reversed

the flow so we were pumping water into the sinking ship instead out. By Jove I think we succeeded and sank the ship in record time. We were so proud.

At the end of the exercise we were called to formation and told that we were in 'BIG TROUBLE". Liberty was canceled and we were all to report to the smoke building at 1900. Well we thought it could have been worse. We marched to the smoke building expecting to don Scott Air Packs but were told that this time we'd do the walk though without them. Some grizzled old Chief with a cigar in his mouth slowly led us through while explaining the seriousness of our crimes. After we were all hacking, coughing and vomiting he finally released us to a night of restriction to quarters and warnings of what was to come. For unknown reasons that was the end of it and no further action was taken against us.

Actually it was a pretty light punishment from a humorless Navy.